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Tattoos on the Heart

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Tattoos on the Heart

Reader's Guide for the 2013 LMU Common Book

LMU Mission

- How does Fr. Boyle's description of kinship correspond to LMU's goal of developing "men and women for others"?
- Given LMU's identity as a Jesuit/Marymount university, how does one person's service in a particular community matter? <u>Why</u> does it matter?

Chicana/o Studies & Ethnic Studies

- What do you know about East Los Angeles, and what descriptors would you assign to it (examples: Mexican, dangerous, many murals, Catholic, etc.)?
- What are the ways in which East Los Angeles residents and gang members are imagined? What social and ideological structures support these images? How do East LA residents and former gang members represent themselves?

Education

- How does education (or lack of education) play a role in the stories told in *Tattoos*?
- To what extent does learning that takes place outside of the classroom prepare gang members for life outside of the gang culture?

Entrepreneurship

- In what ways do lack of job training and unavailability of jobs perpetuate gang violence and crime in low-income communities?
- What makes the "Homeboy model" successful? What is missing from this model?

Gender & Family Studies

- What are the unique challenges that homegirls face as women?
- What is the relationship between parenting and gang membership?
- How are "fathers" and "mothers" represented in this text?

History

- What historical factors led to the development of poor and mostly-Latino neighborhoods like Boyle Heights?
- Why did gangs form in these neighborhoods?
- How can these historical explanations for poverty and racial segregation inform the types of personal and policy decisions we make as we try to build a more just and equitable city for the future?

Philosophy & Ethics

- Who are the heroes of *Tattoos of the Heart*, who are the villains, and why?
- What fundamental ethical problems are presented in this text?

Political Science

- How does the "state" (e.g., law enforcement, politicians, etc.) respond to gang violence, particularly in Los Angeles?
- How do Boyle Heights community members respond to gang violence?
- What role does incarceration play for gang members? Does rehabilitation occur in prison?

Psychology

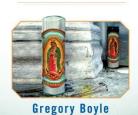
- If Homeboy Industries were to be described as a "Recovery Model," how would you describe the essential elements of its success?
- How do *inadequacy* and *shame* function as obstacles to giving and receiving?
- How would you describe the relationship between hope and empowerment? Between despair and delinquency?

"An astonishing book ... about suffering and dignity, death and resurrection, one of my favorite books in years. It is lovely and tough and tender beyond my ability to describe and left me in tears of both sorrow and laughter." —ANKE LAMOTT, AUTHOR OF GRACE (VEYNTUALLY)

Tattoos on the Heart

THE POWER OF BOUNDLESS

COMPASSION



Public Health/Community Health Sciences

- Homelessness and a lack of healthy food to eat can lead to malnutrition and illnesses like diabetes. How are these issues addressed in the book?
- A *food desert* is an area where there is limited access to grocery stores that offer fresh and affordable foods, like fruits and vegetables. What stores do the homegirls and homeboys go to? How do they get to and from stores?
- What types of illnesses and injuries are most frequently mentioned in the book? Are there any long-term effects from these illnesses and injuries that might affect the individual? Their family? Their community?
- How does the lack of green spaces contribute to gang violence?

Sociology

- According to this text, what are the factors that lead to the proliferation of gangs?
- How do the social hierarchies of race, class, and gender shape the communities and individual lives of homeboys and homegirls?
- How do systems of power and privilege, like racism and class privilege, shape your pre-conceptions of who these individuals are? What do you assume about them, based on their membership in a gang?

Theater & Performance Studies

- In what ways do gang members "perform" their identities? How do they show others who they are?
- When they change their identity (from gang member to former gang member), how do homeboys perform differently?
- Why do you think Father Greg wants these young men and women to speak in public about who they were and who they are? Who is the audience for such a dialogue?

Theology

- How does spirituality and faith play a role in the "Homeboy model"?
- Boyle writes, "Kinship [is] not serving the other, but being one with the other. Jesus was not 'a man for others;' he was one with them." How are the two different, and how does Boyle integrate this distinction into his work?



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